



Charou

Looks





Rebellious sisters* Rebellious sisters* and punk indenture

Look at these pictures of indentured women from Jamaica, Colonial Natal and Fiji. What do they have in common?

Dark skin?
Forlorn expressions?

But look further – what sits proudly on their face, or weighs down their earlobes? Gold or silver jewellery.

This zine is about those (nose and ear) piercings - the adornment and the dissent. Adornment is linked to the culture and religion indentured labourers in Colonial Natal brought with them from South Asia, and refashioned into their own forms of self-expression here.

Classically trained dancers of all genders wore septum piercings, and those from northern and western India preferred their nose piercing on the left nostril, whereas those from southern India wore their nose jewellery on the right. Today, I do not pierce my nose for Goddess Parvati, but for myself ... or to mimic those in my maternal lineage that I see in myself.

What is more punk than resistance?
And indentured woman resisted.
From the ships to the plantations
to the homes of their masters and
mistresses, they demonstrated
agency through their actions. They
feigned illness, deserted, burned
things down, threw themselves off
ships, fought sirdars and abusive
partners, and cursed those who
curtailed their freedom. Their
transgressiveness cannot be imagined
without the glint of their diamond

nose stud as the fire raged through the master's kitchen, or a heavy gold coin belt clinking as women ran away from 'home'. Gold, jewellery, adornment also provided women with capital of their own, to make their way in the world without needing to be partnered with men to access rations or money.

* I took inspiration from Kalpana Hiralal's work for this text, and bell hooks' **Black Looks** for the spirit of this zine, including title.





We do not love ourselves, therefore we
Because we see in each other's face our
never stopped wanting. Because we survi
desire for more self. A face we never stop
time as we try to obliterate it. Why don'
eyes? Do we expect betrayal in each othe

—At
to En



conventional western notions of a "unitary" self. Again it's worth restating Donna Haraway's challenge to feminist thinkers to resist making "one's own political tendencies to be the telos of the whole" so we can accept different accounts of female experience and also face ourselves as complex subjects who embody multiple locations. In "A Manifesto for Cyborgs," she urges us to remember that, "The issue is dispersion. The task is to survive in diaspora."

—bell hooks from *Black Looks*

cannot love each other.
r own face, the face we
lived and survival breeds
ped wanting at the same
it we meet each other's
er's gaze, or recognition.

Audre Lorde from *Eye*
re

*Yencamah's
ears were
pierced by
thorns from
the lemon tree.*

*She pierced
the ears of all
girl-children
in compound.*

*She took a
thorn from
the tree, held
it over a flame
until it started
smoking, and
then quickly
pierced the
screaming*

*child's ears.
She saw a
child she
had pierced
12 years ago
being forced
to undress by
a man with
a panga. He
was found
dead a few*

*days after he
tried to grab
the child; his
body a grotesque
sculpture of
lemon tree
thorns.*



All over Chatsworth and Phoenix, and Lenasia to a lesser extent, old cinemas house new Pentecostal churches that offer at once to save you and relieve you of the gold in your thali. In Phoenix, if you arrive at the right time of the year, you can bear witness to a twice-born devotee carrying Kavady while bedecked in Gucci sunglasses. Her roti (North Indian) husband hangs on to her Jimmy Choos in his air-conditioned BMW. Down at Britannia Hotel—where, in the time of our fathers, 'non-Europeans' could not enter, but which is now owned by an Indian—

- Goolam Vahed and Ashwin Desai
A History of the Present

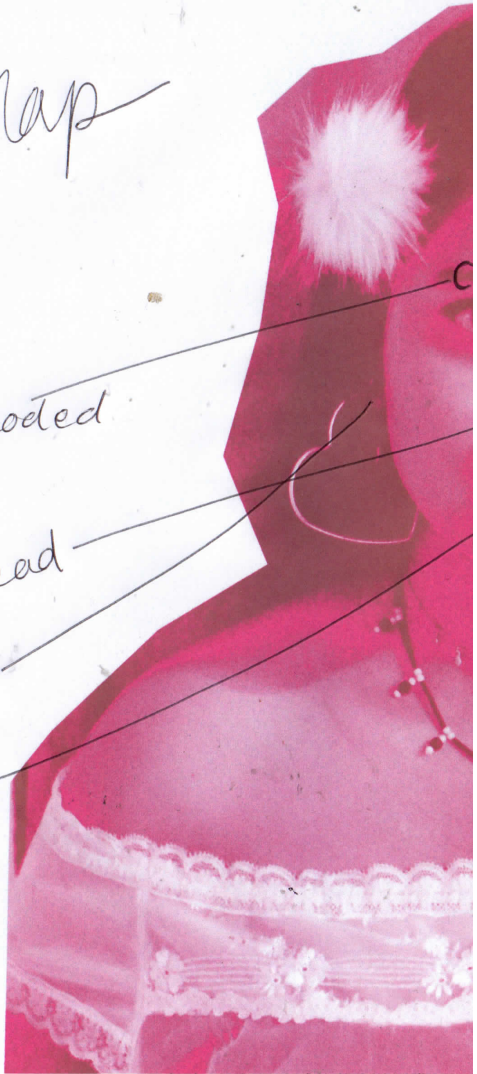
Face Map

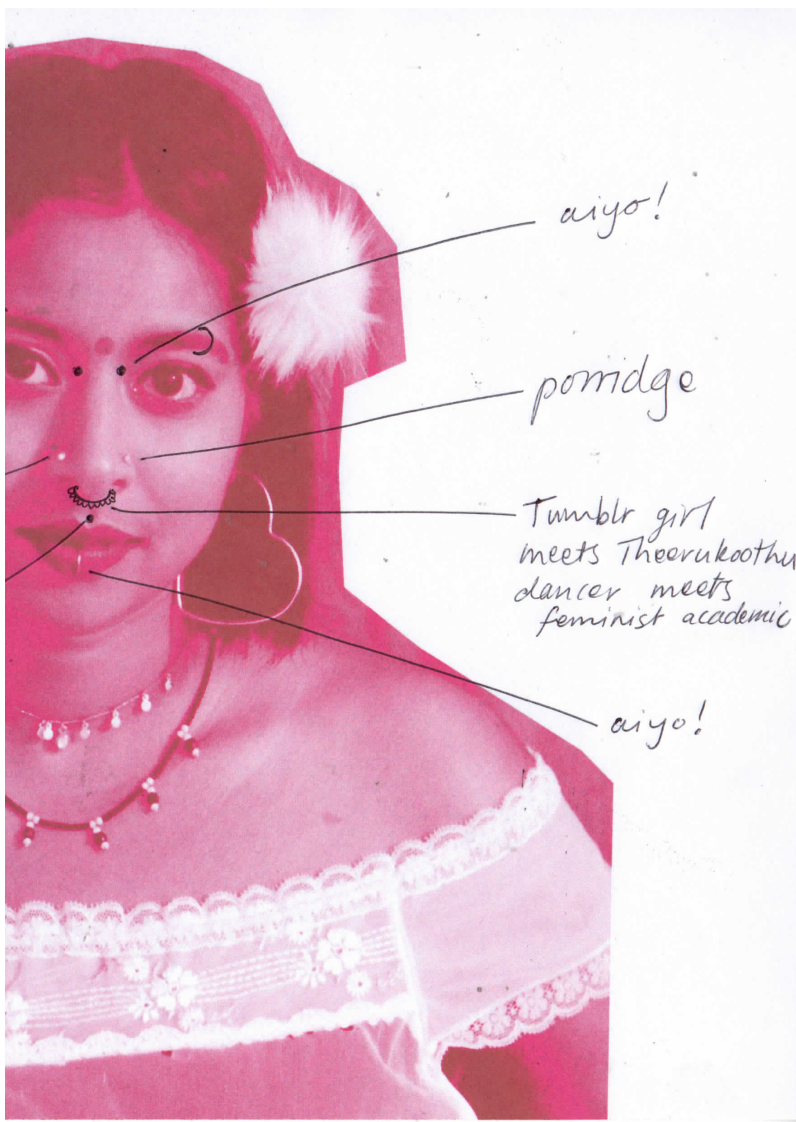
queer-coded

bread

blessing

aiyo!



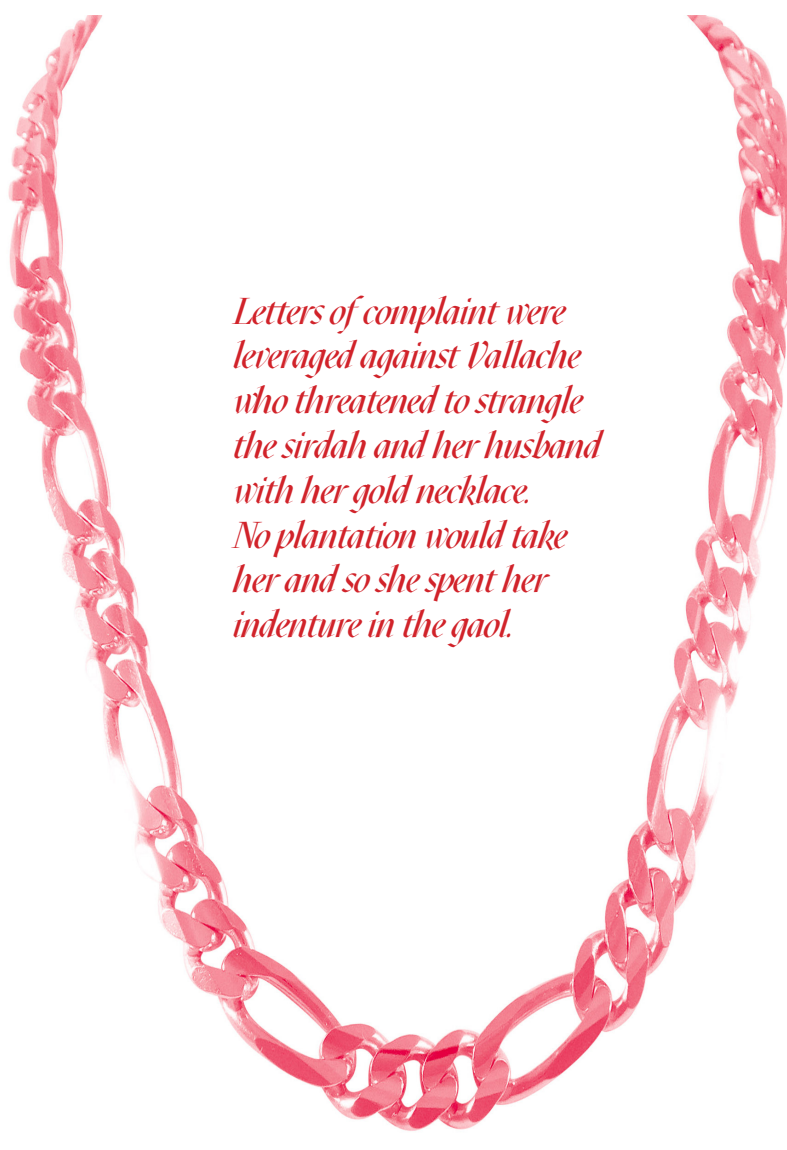


aiyo!

pomridge

Tumblr girl
meets Theerukoothu
dancer meets
feminist academic

aiyo!



*Letters of complaint were
leveraged against Vallache
who threatened to strangle
the sirdah and her husband
with her gold necklace.
No plantation would take
her and so she spent her
indenture in the gaol.*

The arkatia came with
promise and lies
Oh! The suffering and
the pain of the journey
Few were there who did
not cry
Many preferred to die
We were told we were
going to a land with so
much gold
Now that we are here,
Oh! Our bodies are
melting like gold!

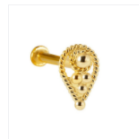
*–Bhojpuri folk song from
repatriated indentured labourers
translated by Prakash Deosingh*



Eating the Other
Desire and Resistance

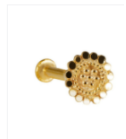


Is it cultural appropriate



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'But hold hard! What's this?' He turned to the girl. 'You're not a Muslim.' She wore the pantaloons, the three-quarter tunic, and the *dawni* – the two-and-a-half yards of material with an embroidered border which Muslim women wear as a head scarf, draping the head and shoulders, but the name and the faintly tattooed centre line on the brow were Hindu. She wore earrings, nose-stud, and bangles, but the Hindu anklets were gone.



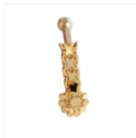
– James Saunders reflecting on Chandoo, one of the first indentured labourers to work on his plantation in Tongaat. Source: *A History of the Present*, by Goolam Vahed and Ashwin Desai



appropriation for a white girl to have a nose - Quora



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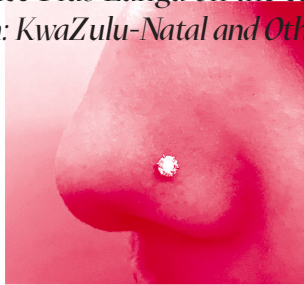




THANAMAL DESERTED THE PLANTATION WITH RAWWANTI. THEY SOLD THEIR SILVER AND GOLD JEWELS FOR LODGINGS IN TOWN AND LIVED TOGETHER SELLING VEGETABLES ON FLOWER ROAD — TWO COOLIE MARY'S IN LOVE.

सर्वज्ञानद्वय
१९५०-५१
१९५२-५३

“At the centre of the storm is a tiny gold nose stud”
– Chief Justice Pius Langa on the court case *MEC
Education: KwaZulu-Natal and Others vs Pillay*



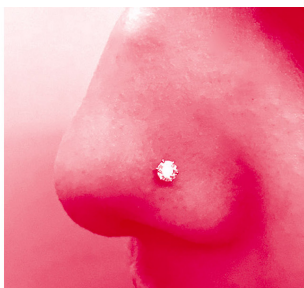
Sunali Pillay and her mother, Navaneethum, fought Durban Girls High about their discriminatory uniform policies in 2005. Sunali pierced her nose, following tradition. The school did not like this.

“In a letter dated 1 February 2005, Ms Pillay apologised for not having discussed the issue of Sunali’s nose stud with Mrs Martin beforehand. She explained that she and Sunali came from a South Indian family that intends to maintain cultural identity by upholding the traditions of the women before them. The insertion of the nose stud was part of a time-honoured family tradition. It entailed that a young woman’s nose was pierced and a stud inserted when she reached physical maturity as an

indication that she had become eligible for marriage. The practice today is meant to honour daughters as responsible young adults.

When Sunali turned sixteen, her grandmother would replace the gold stud with a diamond stud. She claimed that this was to be done as part of a religious ritual to honour and bless Sunali. Ms Pillay made it clear that the wearing of the nose stud was not for fashion purposes but as part of a long-standing family tradition and for cultural reasons.” – *Constitutional Court case documents*

The case set for whether religious and practices are by the of South Court pointed



Code of Conduct, like the one adopted by Durban Girls' High School, is not a neutral document. The norms of such a code actually enforce mainstream and historically privileged practices and excludes marginalised practices.

the precedent voluntary cultural protected Constitution Africa. The out that a





A zine by Youlendree Appasamy

